



Dance of Despair



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Double (Romantic) Trouble

By Cam

Ikusaba Mukuro is not particularly smart. Or perhaps at least when it comes to planning something exceptionally creative such as a promposal.

Promposal. What a funny, stupid word! A promposal, by definition, is some huge, creative gesture to the one you wish to go to prom with—whether it is a romantic partner, a friend, or even an acquaintance, asking them to attend by your side. There is probably no one who remembers the first promposal in history, but it can be assumed the receiver was quite surprised yet delighted. Whoever that person was must have been someone very special.

And in Ikusaba's eyes, there is no one more special than Maizono Sayaka. Thus there's no one else she'd rather go to Prom with than her.

Their relationship is. . .Ikusaba can't exactly put a name on it. They're more than friends. They don't have an established relationship. Maybe a kickass promposal is just the way to complete the latter.

But again, Ikusaba doesn't have a creative bone in her body, so that's very much going to be a problem regarding her promposal.

Maizono Sayaka has never had the best academic prowess, but when it comes to more creative matters such as song-writing and creating elaborate performances, she excels. But since she's decided that her next big project is to be a promposal to her longtime companion Ikusaba, she's been drawing a blank.

Maizono considers her an interesting specimen and a dear companion? Friend? Best friend? Almost-girlfriend? If she wants to have someone as her date to the Prom, then there's no one better than Ikusaba. However, it's pretty unfortunate that she hasn't been able to find a fun way to ask her yet.

Come to think of it, would Ikusaba even respond positively to a promposal in general? She's never been one to draw attention to herself, and she is perfectly content to shy away from the public eye whenever she sees fit—which is difficult when she's one of the many famous and talented Ultimates who attend Hope's Peak. That is just one of the several aspects that set Ikusaba apart from Maizono, but there is still an attraction.

A more private promposal with just the two of them would probably be best for Ikusaba.

The soldier knows that Maizono is an extremely popular girl that would never hide away from her schoolmates and adoring fans. In fact, it seems she loves them almost as much as they love her. She would probably adore the attention and fanfare of a lavish promposal. And there's nothing wrong with that; it's just who she is.

A grand public gesture where everyone could see the two of them would probably be best for Maizono.

Unfortunately, both of them were utterly stumped for any more complex ideas than that.



Maizono sits down at her desk in the corner of her dorm room, staring down at the blank piece of paper, tapping the eraser of her mechanical pencil against it. She groans, frustrated and berating herself for not having even one idea.

She curses under her breath, dropping the pencil and burying her face in her hands. “I’ll never be able to come up with something good!” She groans, squishing her face.

The idol decided on something private for Ikusaba, but how private would it have to be? Like, she invites her over and asks her inside, and there’s a painted cardboard sign on the wall? Would that even be too much for the soldier?

Maizono’s pencil slips from between her fingers, and she just lets it clatter to the floor. Her eyes fall to the calendar on the wall with a sigh. There’s still a month and a bit before the prom, but she’s always been the type to plan ahead.

“I’m doomed!” She mutters, placing her face back in her hands.



Ikusaba paces from one end of her room to the other, face scrunched up in a frown.

“Romantic gesture, romantic gesture,” She mumbles, “Ugh, I don’t know the first thing about a romantic gesture! And in public? There’s no way I’ll be able to manage that!”

She's seen plenty of viral promposals online ever since she was younger, and they're all fantastic, resulting in enthusiastic 'yeses' from the receiver like it was nothing. It would be so *dangerously easy* to steal one of those, but Maizono would definitely give her more credit if it were something original.

Yeah, that's not her strong suit.

But would there really be something wrong with stealing someone else's promposal idea as long as Maizono hasn't seen it before? A lot of them were pretty basic and along the same idea if she really thinks about it.

Get a big cardboard sign, write something stupid and clever on it, and present it to the prospective prom date. It seems simple enough.

But if she wants to show Maizono she really cares, she's back to the enormous romantic gesture, more than just a sign.

This leads her to YouTube, where all of the wild, humiliating promposals with choreographed numbers and songs are. Ikusaba knows deep in her heart these are the things for Maizono but...really? Does she have to?

However, it does (unfortunately) sound like the sort of thing she would love.

...If she's going to pull this off, she's going to need some help.



"Who's ever heard of a lowkey promposal?!" Maizono asks the stuffed bear sitting on her shelf. Its red and black eyes stare back at her blankly. "...Of course, you don't answer."

She rolls over, burying her face in her pillow, kicking her legs restlessly. “Lowkey, lowkey,” Her voice is muffled, “What a ridiculous notion! Possible probably, but still!”

Maizono flops onto her back, staring at the marks on her ceiling. “Not entirely unheard of, I suppose...but the options are even more limited. Especially if I want something original.”

She stands, hobbling to her desk and sitting down, signing into her computer to search for information.

When in doubt, Pinterest.



“Thanks for helping me out, Asahina-san.” Ikusaba groans, gripping the handle of the shopping cart tighter. The two of them make their way side by side down aisle five of the arts and crafts store.

The swimmer smiles. “Oh, no problem! So what exactly did you have in mind?”

Ikusaba bites her lip, pointedly looking in the opposite direction. “I’m not sure yet. I was hoping that something here would give me some inspiration. I want to be original, but at the same time, it would be so easy to just write ‘Prom?’ on a sign.”

“Yeah, I get that.”

“But it would be more heartfelt if I came up with something original at the same time, you know? But again, not my strong suit.”

“Understood.”

Asahina smiles to herself, remembering the promposal done to her just last week done by her best friend-turned love interest. She's happy to be here to help out Ikusaba. Everyone deserves a beautiful promposal story no matter what happens in the future.

"So, any ideas yet?" The brunette asks cheerfully as they turn down another aisle.

The black-haired girl groans. "None. Asahina-san, you have to help me."

The brunette touches his shoulder, steeling her gaze. "Okay, okay, relax, Ikusaba-san, we're going to figure it out. We're not coming out of this store until we have an idea. I promise."

"Thanks, Asahina-san."

"Don't mention it! Now let's see..." Asahina scans the aisle carefully before her eyes land on some cream coloured letters covered in what has got to be fifty tiny lightbulbs. There's at least one of every letter of the English alphabet on the shelf, instantly ready to use.

The swimmer tugs on Ikusaba's sleeve and points. The other girl huffs and turns in that direction, eyes widening as the gears turn in her brain.

"Oh! Maybe I can make a little display or something like that, right? Spell out the word 'Prom' and get some little trinkets to go with it, huh? Sure, people have done displays before, but none look exactly the same."

Asahina nods eagerly. "Now we're talking, Ikusaba-san! That's a wonderful idea!"

Asahina stares at the letters again in thought. "Hmm... Those all appear to be English letters, though, so what do you want to do? Spell it out in Romaji?"

The Ultimate Soldier shrugs back. "Puromu," She says, "I think that would be okay. It looks like there are enough letters for it too."

"Then it's settled! Let's get the letters before anyone else does and see if we can find anything else neat to put in the setup!" Ikusaba nods and pushes the cart over to the shelf, proceeding to pick out the ones she needs.

"Rose petals," She mutters to herself, "And gentle music. Perhaps a violinist as well."

Yes, this is going to be good.



Maizono frowns at the ceiling from her position on her bed, lazily strumming her guitar.

She's running out of time to propose. No, not quite running out of time to ask, but she is running out of time to plan something elaborate and extra special.

"It's no use!" She complains to the stuffed bear, "And Pinterest was no help at all! All I'm good at is music and singing stuff! I mean, I guess I could use my talent, but wouldn't that be too predictable?"

She's starting to think the bear is never going to answer her.

"Okay, now I think writing her a song is too much. But as of right now, it seems performance is all I've got... I mean, it'll probably work. Yeah, let's try it, little stuffed

Monokuma!" She exclaims, sitting up all of the way, fingers adjusting her guitar in the process.

"Alright, let's see... what're the best things about Ikusaba that I can put into song? Why do I want to take her as my date to the prom? Hmm, Ikusaba-san..."

Ikusaba is beautiful and strong, and very intelligent. She would most certainly rock a stunning dress or a well put-together suit or even a combination of both like she's seen online sometimes. But that's not the only thing that's wonderful about her.

Whenever Maizono is around the black-haired girl, her chest erupts with butterflies, and her cheeks go pink. She knows she's smitten with the Ultimate Soldier, but will she be able to convey her feelings properly in song?

Well, of course, she can! She's the Ultimate Pop Sensation. After all, it's what she does!

However, she doesn't exactly have a lot of time now. If she's going to pull this off, she might need a little bit of help. Or at least a second professional opinion.



"Okay, Maizono-chan," Akamatsu Kaede smiles brightly, holding out her hand, "Show me what you've got so far!"

Maizono frowns at the scrap piece of paper she was workshopping some lyric ideas on before reluctantly handing it over to the pianist. Akamatsu reads it over carefully before smiling back at her friend.

"Wow, Maziono-chan, this is really good so far!" She

commends her, “How long are you hoping this song to be?”

The idol considers. “Only a couple of lines. I don’t want it to be too long, of course...Do you think Ikusaba-san would even like or appreciate a song?”

“Ikusaba-san will appreciate anything you do for her,” The blonde smirks, “After all, I think she’ll be thrilled enough that you’re promposing her in general!”

Maizono frowns, cheeks going a bit rosy. “W-What makes you think that?”

“Oh, come on, Maizono-chan. Don’t tell me you haven’t noticed the way she looks at you. We certainly have noticed the way you look at her in turn! You could hand her a piece of trash on a stick and ask her to prom, and her eyes would light up. She will be delighted to accept anything you offer her.”

The royal blue-haired girl looks down at her lap.

Could that really be true? They have flirted in the past, but she always assumed only her own was genuine. There is no possible way that someone as wonderful as Ikusaba would love and appreciate her that much.

But then again, if she didn’t believe that on some level, she wouldn’t be going through with such an elaborate promposal.

Probably.

But that’s exactly how Maizono feels about the soldier. If those sentiments are genuinely returned, then...

Maizono’s head snaps up. “How soon do you think I can finish this?”

Akamatsu grins.



Rose petals are scattered all over the floor of Ikusaba's basement.

Hundreds of fairy lights that look like quartz crystals hang down from the walls, filling the otherwise dark room with dazzling light. On a table off to the side sits a vase filled with pink roses, and next to it is a small box of chocolates. And finally, in the very back of the room against the wall, are the letters Ikusaba and Asahina picked out, spelling out 'Puromu?'

Ikusaba paces from one end of the small room to the other, waiting for Maizono to show up. She had texted Maizono ten minutes ago asking if she could come to her home, to which she responded she would be "right there."

She should've been here by now.

Or maybe Ikusaba had lost all concept of timing to her nerves.

But little did she know a very-jittery Maizono had just pulled into her driveway, a bouquet of flowers and her guitar in the trunk. She's nervous as well—so nervous, in fact, that her knees nearly buckle under her the second she steps out onto the pavement.

She goes to the trunk with slow, careful steps, slinging the guitar over her shoulders first before grabbing the bouquet. She takes a deep, cleansing breath before shutting the trunk and forcing her feet to carry her towards the door.

She knocks once, twice, three times before picking up

the rapid shuffle of feet racing towards the door. Maizono hides the bouquet of flowers behind her back just as the door is flung open by a frazzled-looking Ikusaba.

Maizono smiles warmly. “Hello, Ikusaba-chan.” She greets her.

Ikusaba nods back breathlessly, making room in the doorway for the musician to slip inside. “Hello, Maizono-chan. Come on in.”

So she does.

Maizono’s eyes travel the room curiously, looking around for any clues that might indicate why she was asked here so suddenly. Luckily, she doesn’t have to wonder about that for long.

“Will you come down to the basement with me?” Ikusaba asks politely, “There’s something I’d like to show you.”

“Hmm? Oh, yes! Lead the way Ikusaba-chan!”

The soldier turns and walks towards the stairs leading down to the basement, her crush following close behind.

“Alright, um, I set up a little something for you,” The black-haired girl mumbles as they reach the bottom, “So, I actually called you here because I set up a little something for you. I hope you like it, but it’s totally fine if you don’t.”

Maizono smiles warmly. “I’m sure whatever it is, I’ll love it. Although there is something I’ll want to show you a-” She trails off as they enter the room together, and her eyes fall on Ikusaba’s little display.

“Puromu,” She whispers, “No way...”

Ikusaba shyly moves so that she’s standing in front of the display, facing Maizono. “Maizono-chan, will you go to p-”

“NO!”

“N-No?!”

Maizono curses. “No, I didn’t mean I wouldn’t go with you; I just wanted to be the one to prompose to you!” She’s quick to explain to her companion, “I brought my guitar here because I wrote a little song. Listen,” She shifts her guitar, so it’s in front of her, “One, two, three, four, I-”

“Not so fast,” The soldier intervenes, “I was already in the process of my promposal, so you’re going to have to wait your turn. So, Maizono Sayaka-”

“Ikusaba Mukuro-”

“-Will you go to prom with me?”

“-Will you go to prom with me?”

Both of them fall silent immediately after, locking eyes. Of course, their silence only lasts for a second before they dissolve into laughter.

“Let’s just...let’s just agree to go together, alright? I mean, we both technically got a chance to prompose, so...”

Maizono beams. “Sounds great to me.”

She carefully sets her guitar on the ground, and she crosses the room to stand with her.

“May I kiss you?” She asks politely.

“I would be rather upset if you didn’t.”

The idol smiles and presses her lips to the other’s.

It feels like all of the stars have finally aligned.



One Step At A Time

By Sunny

“Mr. Taichi! Mr. Taichi! Take a look at this!”

Taichi glanced up from his laptop to see an excited Kotoko. In her hands, she was holding out a pastel pink pamphlet. Taking the pamphlet from her hands, he opened it up and started reading the contents within. Aside from the overabundance of glitter and hard-to-read text, it was basically about an upcoming school dance for the Elementary School Division. Hosted in the gymnasium of Hope's Peak Academy, the event was little over a month away, and would last for about three hours: Six o'clock to nine o'clock in the evening. The rest of the information was rather standard for a school dance, especially for younger students. Snacks and drinks will be available, a photo booth and props for it will be there, age-appropriate music will be playing (whatever that possibly meant), other activities would be hosted, so on and so on. And just seeing the anticipation from Kotoko alone made it clear what she wanted.

“Ugh, are you showing Mr. Taichi the pamphlet about our upcoming school dance?” Nagisa asked, not taking his eyes off of his latest homework assignment.

“Of course I am! I want all of us to go and have tons of fun. We'll be the most adorbs ones at that dance! So can we please go, Mr. Taichi? Pretty, pretty plleeassee?”

“W-Well, o-of course you can go... but have you a-asked

the others if they'd like to go?" Taichi said.

"Well, no, I haven't. Not yet, tee-hee. Ohhh Nagisa--!"

"I'm not going. Period." Nagisa sternly said, accidentally breaking off a bit of pencil lead. Huffing out in slight aggravation, he clicked on his mechanical pencil until he was satisfied and resumed his work.

"N-Nagisa, we've talked about this before," Taichi closed his laptop for the moment. He had a feeling this school dance stuff would take awhile. "I-I understand just how important school is to you, and I agree that it is important. B-But you also need to try and give yourself more b-breaks. Y-You're putting too much stress on yourself. I-I think... I think this dance would be a fun and interesting experience for you. For all of you kiddos."

Nagisa looked Taichi in the eyes for a few moments. Deep down, he wanted to just set his pencil down, take a deep breath, and allow himself to actually relax; allow himself to live life as a kid. But his pride and self-set expectations restricted him, and he automatically continued working, blue eyes back to staring at his schoolwork.

"Okay dokey, so that's a yes from Nagisa!" Kotoko confirmed with a playful wink. With only three more to ask, she twirled a few times before facing Monaca and Jataro. "Monaca! Jataro! Let's go to the school dance together! What do you think?"

"A school dance where all of Monaca's friends will be? That sounds like so much fun! Monaca's not a dancer, but that's okay. Dances aren't about dancing and dancing only. They can also be about making great memories and having

fun with friends. Monaca would love to go with Monaca's dearest friends!" Monaca said, warmly smiling.

"The lights are usually dimmed down at school dances, and there'll be large crowds, so like, that's a perfect opportunity for aliens to sneak in. I wonder if aliens like to dance. Can they even dance? Do you think they'd be good dancers?" Jataro rambled, doing his best to color in the lines in his new coloring book. The book was themed around marine animals.

"I-I think so? I-I'm not for sure, kiddo. Heh, maybe you'll be able to f-find out if you go to the d-dance? I-If you don't feel comfortable going though, then I'm not going to force you. Same goes for *all* of you kiddos. I think school dances are n-nice, but what you kiddos want c-comes first." Taichi reassured them.

"Monaca genuinely wants to go to a school dance!" Monaca told him.

Nagisa mumbled something under his breath, but didn't bother speaking up or looking up. Taichi could only assume it was something decent, as he didn't want to push him any further. He knew his limits and boundaries, and continuously pushing despite seeing a warning would only make his mood worse. The last thing he'd want was to upset a kid, his kid, even further, let alone at all.

"You already know that I want to go, Mr. Taichi!" Kotoko said.

"E-Even if no aliens show up at the dance, it'd be interesting to go to it. Dancing aliens would be pretty weird, wouldn't they? Even if they're good at dancing, I think dancing humans are better. They don't have long

limbs or UFOs. Oh, but the music will probably be really loud, huh? It'll probably be louder than a billion kazoos being played all at once..."

"If you want to, ki-kiddo, you can bring your noise-canceling headphones with you."

"Good idea! Similar to what Monaca said, there's more to school dances than the music they play at a dance. We can still have fun eating snacks, looking absolutely adorbs, and spending time together."

"Then... Then yeah, I'll go to the school dance. If I spot any dancing aliens and stuff, then I'll make sure to tell you, Taichi."

"I-I look forward to hearing about it, kiddo."

"So the only one left is Masaru." Kotoko pointed out.

"Last time Monaca checked, Masaru was playing video games in his room. Monaca believes he was playing *Space Invaders*." Monaca said.

"Oh, you mean the game where you go pew-pew at alien intruders? That's kind of cool and stuff," Jataro added.

"Man, stupid Masaru and his silly games," Kotoko pouted, crossing her arms. She considered yelling his name and calling him over, but she didn't want to accidentally overstimulate or spook Jataro. So, she came up with another idea. "Intermission, everyone! I'll go get him."

Running off, it wasn't long before Taichi and the others heard the faint sound of pausing a video game, followed up by a loud groan before Kotoko dragged Masaru

into the living room, an innocent smile drawn on her face.

“I can’t believe you dragged me out here just to hear me say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ on something. And I was so close to getting a new high score too!” Masaru said. He wasn’t actually angry about it or anything, but considering how focused he initially was, it was still a bother to him, albeit minor and childish.

“If only you could get grades as high as your video game scores,” Nagisa mumbled out, snickering.

“What did you say, Mr. Smarties?”

“Ki-Kiddos, please, not now. Let’s not start another a-argument, okay? Remember what we talked about when it comes to calling each other not-so-nice names, Masaru?” Taichi said, his tone gentle and caring.

“... Yes, I do. I’m sorry,” Masaru said. “So what’s this about a school dance, Koto?”

“A school dance! It’s a little over a month away, but it’s always best to prepare for the show! I’d love for all of us to go, and me and the others have already said we’re going, so wanted to see if you wanted to come with us.” Kotoko explained.

“D-Don’t feel pressured to go i-if you don’t want to, kiddo,” Taichi said. “I-I’m not saying you’re pressuring him, Kotoko! I-I’m not, I promise. You’re not pressuring him. I just want Masaru to know that just because other p-people he knows are going, d-doesn’t mean he has to if he doesn’t want to.”

“Hmph, I-I don’t fall under any kind of peer pressure

anyway, Tai! Nope, not at all. I'm a great leader, through and through!" Masaru proudly exclaimed.

"Yes you are, kiddo. You're a great leader, and I'm proud of you for that," Taichi gave Masaru a few soft headpats, chuckling as Masaru whined in embarrassment but didn't bat his kind gesture away.

"As you rightfully should! Anyway, about the dance, will I be able to run around and stuff? I could try to dance, but I'm not a great dancer. I'm more into sports than, you know, dancing..."

"You can run around to your heart's content, Masaru!" Kotoko said, wrapping her arm around Masaru's shoulders. "Just because it'll mainly be in the gymnasium doesn't mean you can go elsewhere, as long as you're not breaking any rules. Oh oh oh, and here's a total gamechanger for you: There's gonna be snacks and drinks there!"

"Whoa, really? Well, if you guys are going and all of that is true, then count me in! I'll probably be able to outrun even the best dancers there. Maybe I can impress them with my cool cartwheel, too," Masaru said.

"That's five yeses out of five, which means that we're all going to the school dance! Omigosh, I'm already so excited! I can't wait for us to go." Kotoko bounced around in joy, pumping her fists in the air.

"I'm happy to hear that, Kotoko. I-I'm sure a-all of you kiddos will have a good time there. Since it says tickets will start selling a week from now, I-I'll make sure to give you kiddos money to buy them when the time comes. A-And I'll make sure t-to save up for suits and dresses, or for whatever you kiddos feel more comfortable wearing."

“You’re, like, the best, Mr. Taichi! Thank you, thank you, thank you sooo much!” Kotoko tightly hugged Taichi, receiving a sheepish chuckle and pat on the back.

“It’s really nothing, kiddo. I want you kiddos to have as much fun as possible. Of course, s-school’s still very important, but fun is important, too. I’ll do whatever I can to make you kiddos happy,” Taichi set his laptop aside and stood up, stretching and taking a look at his watch. “Diddly-darn, dinner time already? A-All right, kiddos, wh-what do you think we should have for dinner?”

“Dinosaur chicken nuggets and fries!” Masaru said.

“Monaca thinks some sandwiches and tea would make for a good dinner,” Monaca commented.

“We’re not aliens, so we can’t have alien food. We’re only able to eat human food, like ramen... yeah, ramen sounds good right about now,” Jataro blurted out.

“Seriously you guys? We should stick to a healthy meal, like grilled chicken and cauliflower rice,” Nagisa stated.

“Nuh-uh, no way! That’s totally not adorbs at all. We should have a super adorbs meal, like panda-themed omurice with peeled chestnuts and cute octopus sausages!” Kotoko added.

“U-Uh, ki-kiddos...” Taichi fidgeted with the bottom of his button-up shirt, trying to gather his thoughts. It wasn’t a case of pressure from a bunch of pre-teens; hearing multiple ideas at once and trying to decide just wasn’t his best strength.

During moments like these, he was grateful to have more cooking knowledge under his belt, thanks to the help of the internet and a particular Ultimate Chef. Taichi attempted to reassure Chihiro that he wasn't about to make a high school student tutor him, a young adult, on how to cook, but Chihiro kept insisting until he gave in. Teruteru didn't mind, as he was open to teaching anyone the ways of cooking, and he knew to be more respectful around adults (he'd been improving his overall behavior and attitude as time goes on). For the most part, he was good with sticking to making just one big meal for his children, but there were also moments where he wanted to try to come out of his bubble, even if only by a little bit; moments where he wanted to make his kids as happy as humanly possible.

This was one of those moments.

With a heavy heart and a deep breath, Taichi smiled with determination as he walked into the kitchen and said: "G-Guess we'll be having a li-little bit of everything for dinner then..."



Saving up for appropriate formal attire wasn't as rough as Taichi initially assumed. He was always a smart man when it came to budgeting and finances, so once he realized it was simply self-doubt, it didn't bother him anymore. Granted, he didn't let that get to his head, for he already had a store in mind: Dress-n-Shima. It was a clothing store that provided formal dresses and suits for younger children. It was of good quality, and it helped that it wouldn't kill Taichi's wallet.

As for trying everything out, it took longer than expected. Kotoko just *had* to have two dresses, and Taichi

only found it fair that if she wanted two, then the others could also pick out two formal outfits. He could afford adding a little extra to the total (although he internally vowed to never do that again though).

Nagisa was the easiest one to please, as formal attire was his calling. Jataro was more concerned about his mask than anything, although that was a given (and therefore wasn't too hard finding him some suits). Certain fabrics rubbed Masaru off the wrong way, both literally and figuratively, but Taichi was able to find comfortable enough suits for him. And Monaca was the hardest, though that was mostly because of her using a wheelchair. She preferred dresses of a certain length, as long ones would get stuck in the wheels, and she didn't care for short ones whatsoever. It took multiple dresses, but eventually, even Monaca found the perfect ones, just for her.

Everyone had their outfits, and not long after, everyone had their tickets. Now all they had to do was wait for the day of the dance to arrive. With everything taken care of, Taichi assumed everything else would be smooth-sailing from here.

He assumed wrong.

It was finally the day of the school dance, and out of any day, everything just seemed to suddenly take a negative turn. In Taichi's home, a mixed pot of panic, stubbornness, and worry was stirred every passing second. He knew he had to do something, and he had to do it fast.

There was no particular order to go by, so Taichi decided to start with Nagisa, who was stationed at the living room's coffee table, studying and working away.

"Nagisa, buddy..." Taichi kneeled down next to him.
"Wh-What did I tell you about--?"

"I remember, Mr. Taichi," Nagisa sternly said, not taking his eyes off of his work. "My academics are far more important than some dance. I'm staying home; the rest of them can go."

"Kiddo, I know I've said that school's important, b-but so is socializing a-and having fun. B-Being a kid... y-you gotta savor that as much as you c-can. You're a very intelligent kid, Nagisa, y-you really are... but y-you need to take care of yourself, t-too."

"I do take care of myself! I take care of myself by recognizing how crucial my future is, and in order to meet people's expectations, I have to work hard, no matter what that takes. Besides, don't you have high expectations for me? You should always expect more from me, Mr. Taichi."

"I-I expect... I expect you to j-just try your hardest. N-Not finishing all of your h-homework the moment you get it, o-or not getting all A's on your report card; n-none of that is the end of the world, kiddo. I just expect you to be a kid and that's it. I-I'm so proud of your hard work and impressive work ethic, but I-I think it's time you take a well-deserved b-break. If y-you can't do it for yourself, th-then do it for me, because th-this old man worries 'bout ya sometimes."

Perhaps it was Taichi's shift in tone, or the fact that he worried about his well-being, but whatever it was, it made Nagisa set his pen down and pause. Admittedly, there were times where schoolwork became too much; the stress was swallowing him whole, and instead of taking a break, he continued pushing past his limits, all for the sake of

receiving the highest grade possible. By no means was this a complete game changer; he still felt strongly connected to working hard. But with some deep thinking, he figured that one school dance wouldn't kill him or negatively affect his academics. He could use a break, and he's been wanting to spend more quality time with the others anyway.

"... Fine. I suppose going to one school event won't cause a catastrophic butterfly effect," Nagisa sat up. "I shall not waste any time with getting my outfit on. You paid a lot for both of my suits, even though I said I was content with just one, so I should put at least one of them to good use. You're... an odd man, Mr. Taichi."

"W-Well, um, thanks?"

With Nagisa dashing off towards his room to change, Taichi smiled with content and moved on to Jataro. Thankfully, he was already wearing his outfit of choice: a dark brown suit, with the sleeves respectfully oversized and swallowing his arms whole. The problem came down to his brown sewn mask, which he was holding in his hands. Taichi didn't need to ask why he had his mask; he already knew why. Sitting down next to him on the couch, he asked, "D-Do you want to tell m-me what's going through your h-head right now, kiddo?"

"I'm just worried that the kids at the dance will go blind once they look at me. I know if any dancing aliens show up, they won't mind. I don't even know if they have good eyesight. But um, yeah, I don't want to make anyone's eyes explode, because that'd be bad and hard to clean up," Jataro explained, fidgeting with his mask.

"Hey, I know wh-why you feel that way. W-We're still working on it, and I know we will be for a while l-longer,

but remember what I've been t-telling you?"

"I do, I think. Whenever the icky black goo tries to take over my brain, you tell me that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. And... you tell me that I don't look all ugly and stuff."

"That's right, kiddo, and that's because you're n-not. I-I'm not a poet or a-anything, so I won't get too, uh, f-fancy here. J-Just know that you're not a ugly kid, Jataro. If any of the other kiddos t-try to say otherwise, l-let me know and I'll d-do my best to take care of it," Taichi ruffled Jataro's light brown hair. "O-Oh, if there's one thing you should b-bring with you, it should be y-your noise-canceling h-headphones."

"Oh yeeeahh... I should totally bring 'em with me. The music will get super duper loud at times, and any dancing aliens might make some noise, too. I'm gonna go get 'em right now!" Jataro hopped off the couch and began skipping to his room when he briefly stopped and glanced back at Taichi. "Taichi, I think the others need your help. Like a video game with a percentage completion bar in the pause menu, you should go help them and stuff."

"A-Already on it, ki-kiddo. I'll get e-everything taken care of i-in time for the dance," Taichi said, feeling genuine confidence course through him. He followed Jataro towards the hallway of bedrooms, and he immediately heard the cries for help from the last three Warriors of Hope. Kotoko's room was the closest, so he walked in there, discovering a distressed Kotoko. "Koto, wh-what's the dilemma here?"

"Uwah, it's the absolute worst, Mr. Taichi, just the absolute worst!" Kotoko cried out dramatically, holding up

two different dresses. “I... I can’t decide which dress to wear to the dance! And I can’t decide on which accessories I want to pair with whichever dress I choose!”

Well, Taichi would never say it out loud, but that was anticlimactic. Then again, this was the one and only Li'l Ultimate Drama; he was used to this kind of dramatic but silly stuff by now.

“Wh-Which one do you like more?” Taichi asked.

“You big ol’ goof, I like both of them equally! What it really comes down to is which one will look more adorbs on me. I want to wear the one that will make my darling peers go: Ahoy! An adorbs fighter! I gotta be center stage at all times, even when I’m off the stage!”

“That’s... n-not entirely true, ki-kiddo. You don’t need t-to impress people off-stage. What’s most important i-is what you want. I get why other people’s opinions m-matter so much to you, but this dance is meant for you ki-kiddos to just have fun! You’re just s-supposed to relax and be a kid, y’know?”

“Hmph, yeah. I know what you mean. Like other fighters, maybe I should look at things from a different angle?”

“G-Good idea! Maybe you should consider wh-which dress and accessories are th-the most comfortable. Whether y-you dance a lot or not, i-it’s always best to wear something c-comfortable. Your comfort m-matters the most.”

“Most comfortable”? I mean, they’re both silky and comfortable, but since I have to choose one, then I’m going

with this one!" Kotoko held up the dress that she was holding in her right hand. It was a sparkly, bubblegum pink ball gown-like dress with tiny frills. "And I'll just stick to wearing a normal pink headband! What do you think, Mr. Taichi?"

"I-I think that sounds fine, but what do you think?"

"Hey, no deflecting questions allowed!" Kotoko puffed her cheeks, her pouting mere playful banter. "But personally, I think that sounds both comfortable and adorbs! I guess sometimes a fighter needs assistance from another fighter, and that's like, totally okay!"

"Tai! Tai!"

"Oh my, sounds like Masaru needs some help! I'd help out like any good fighter, but I can't waste any more time. I have to get ready for the dance. Mr. Taichi, from fighter to fighter, I command you to help Masaru out, please."

"Y-You can count on me, kiddo... *hopefully*," Taichi said, muttering the last part before swiftly walking right into Masaru's bedroom. "Wh-What's wrong, Masaru?"

"Guh- um, I actually changed my mind. N-Nevermind, nothing's wrong at all. You should check up on Monaca, since you've already checked up on everyone else," Masaru fibbed, not making any eye contact with his adoptive father.

Taichi knew Masaru was the type to not ask for help often. Regardless of that fact, he could tell something was wrong, as he immediately noticed Masaru's constant fidgeting and fist clenching. The red-haired boy was already wearing his burgundy red suit, and Taichi was

aware of the second suit Masaru had. It took some thinking for Taichi to realize what the main issue was.

“Is th-that suit uncomfortable, ki-kiddo?”

“No! I-I mean, kind of? No? I don’t know, Tai, it’s stupid and weird,” Masaru said. “It feels comfy and okay at first, but the more I move and the more time passes, it starts to feel like a bunch of ants are crawling over me. And I hate ants! Ants are annoying. They’re as annoying as whatever this suit is made out of.”

“N-Not liking the fabric is o-okay! I guess that suit i-is made better for smaller events. I-I’m sorry, I never considered s-something like that. H-How about this: Grab your drawstring b-bag and bring a ch-change of comfortable clothes. I think even if th-that suit wasn’t uncomfortable, i-if you plan on running around, then something like gym clothes w-would be best to have on hand. Just... make sure your gym clothes match, okay?”

“I will! They *always* match,” Masaru huffed out. “I’m gonna go pack some cool gym clothes now. Kotoko probably sent you here, so now I’m sending you to Monaca’s room! As a great leader, I’m also great with matching clothes, so you can count on me!”

“You’re ri-right, I can. I-I’m down the hall if something e-else comes up, kiddo.”

Leaving Masaru to pack some gym clothes to bring along (they did not match, as he picked a pair of blue gym shorts and a green t-shirt), Taichi walked to the end of the hallway and into Monaca’s room. He was glad and relieved to see her wearing her dress already; an emerald green A-line dress, paired with black leggings and slip-ons. She

said she didn't need any help, and she was right. She was getting better at changing into outfits as of lately. Sitting in her wheelchair, she was brushing out her hair, faced towards her mirror as she brushed away. Her usual smile was plastered on her face, but Taichi sensed something was on Monaca's mind.

"Hey Monaca. A-Are you doing okay? N-Need help with anything?" Taichi started.

"No thank you! Monaca doesn't need help with anything. Monaca managed to change into her school dance outfit just fine, and Monaca's almost ready to go! Monaca heard Taichi helping Monaca's friends, so Monaca wants to thank Taichi for being so nice," Monaca said.

"I-It's no problem at all. H-Helping you ki-kiddos is something I should always d-do, no matter what. Is there anything on your mind? I-I just want to make sure you're content."

Monaca hummed as she set her hairbrush down, her humming ranging in volume. Slipping on a light green ribbon headband to match, she began twiddling her thumbs as she said, "Monaca's excited to go. She's really excited, and she's more excited to be going with her dear friends. Monaca just wants her friends to have as much fun as Monaca. I don't want them to be sad. Will Monaca's friends be okay, Taichi?"

"They'll be okay. For as long as possible, I'll make sure you kiddos are okay and happy. That's a promise."

"Wow, Taichi didn't stutter when talking. Not one bit! Monaca is proud of Taichi. Monaca doesn't mind his stuttering, but Monaca is still proud. Monaca thanks Taichi

for always being a good dad to all of us, including Monaca.”

“A-Again, no problem. I-I’m glad that I’m not unreliable or a-anything like that, ahaha.”

“... Is Taichi okay? Is Taichi happy and well? Monaca doesn’t want Taichi to overwork himself; Monaca wants Taichi to smile with everyone else. After all, Taichi does so much for all of us, so it’s only fair if Taichi is happy and not sad.”

Taichi blinked a few times in astonishment. It wasn’t exactly everyday that Monaca dropped a heart-tugging bombshell like this, and even if she did, he just wasn’t used to sentimental stuff like this. He tugged on and fidgeted with his shirt collar out of habit, smiling out of both sheepishness and thankfulness.

“Yes, I’m okay. I’m happy and well. D-Don’t worry about me too much. Taking c-care of you ki-kiddos is s-something I’ll always do. It’s... It’s the r-right thing for a parent to do, heh.”

“Hmmm... okay! If Taichi says so, then Monaca believes him. Monaca is okay now. Is Taichi ready?”

“Yeah, I-I think so. I’ll go grab my car keys, see if everyone else is ready, and then we’ll b-be off.”

Taichi made his way to the kitchen, where his car keys hung on a small white hook. As much as he wanted to just sit down and breathe, he knew he couldn’t do that just yet. Everyone’s issue seemed to be solved, but he wasn’t one to jump the gun right afterward; he had to receive proper confirmation before doing anything else. He’s been ready, and Monaca said she was ready, but it never hurt to

ask anyway. Returning to stand at the entrance of the hallway, he took a deep breath and asked the big question: "A-Are all of you kiddos ready to go?"

"Monaca is ready to have some fun with her friends."

"Heck yeah, I am so ready now!"

"I'm totes ready to go to the adorbs dance!"

"I'm prepared for any aliens that show up, and I think my suit is alien-proof, so yeah. I'm ready."

"... Yes, I'm ready. We shouldn't waste anymore time though, or else we'll be late."

If Taichi's smile wasn't wide enough, then it certainly was now. He truly was lucky to have the five of them under his care and in his life.

"Great! Let's get going to that dance, and remember to have fun, kiddos!"

















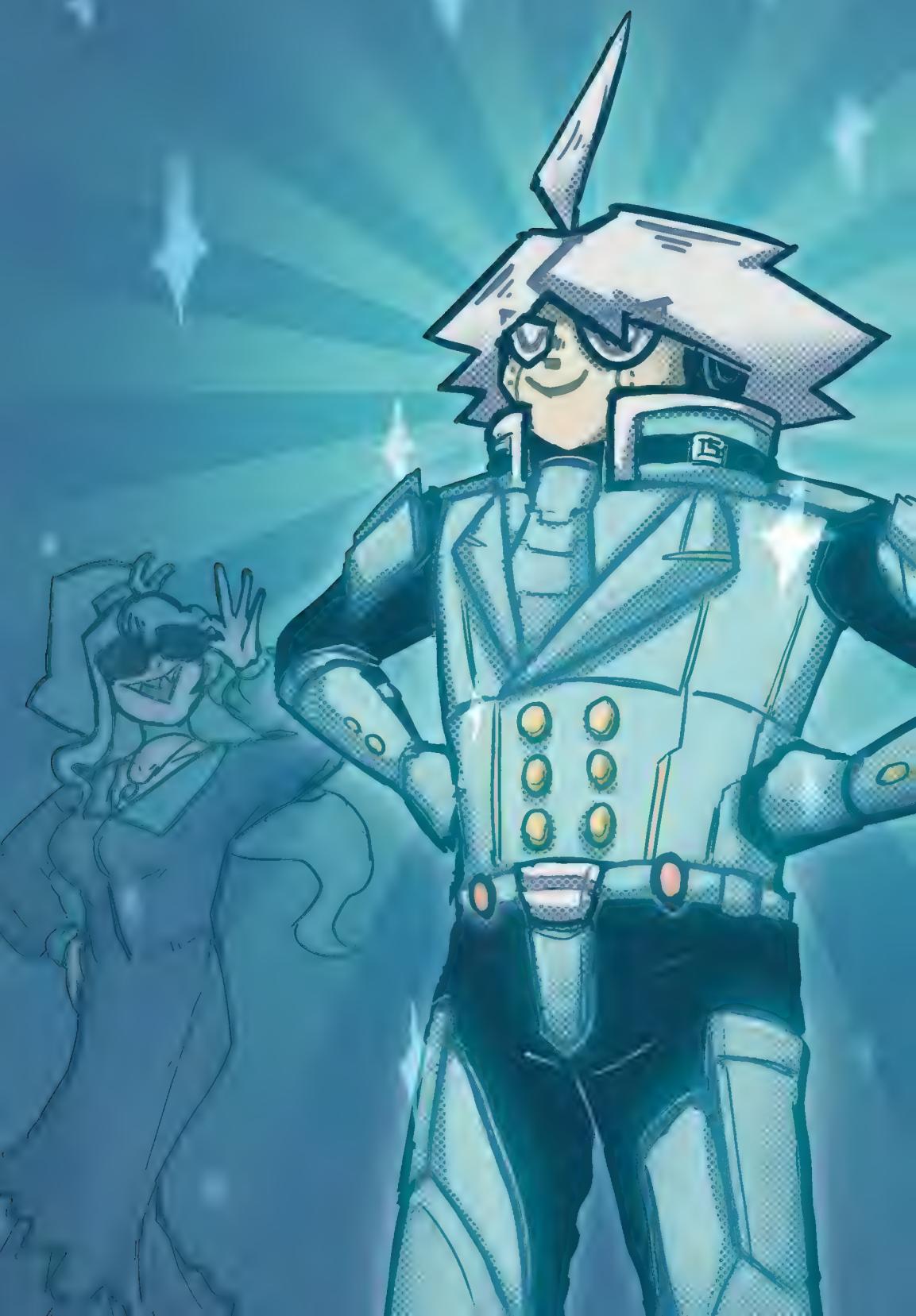




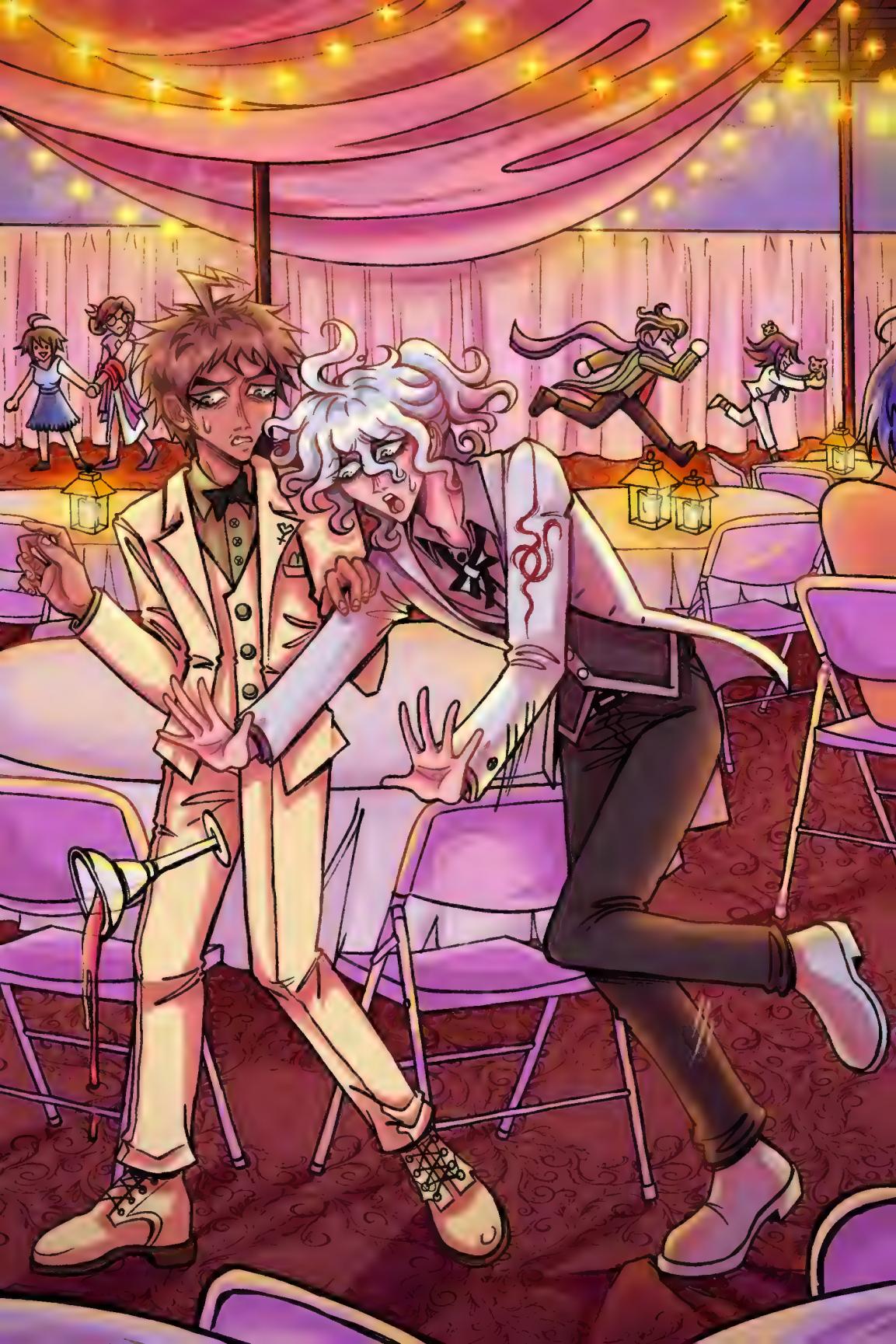


Hajimikuu

















Who will
be...







Rainy Kisses

By Rin

Mikan stared at her reflection in the smudge-covered mirror in the bathroom. A black rubber band tied her choppy hair back into a ponytail, her bangs were sticking up in the air, and some pieces of shiny confetti were nestled on her head. Her eyes were slightly red, and her cheeks were stained with the trails her tears had left behind. She was glad that she never bothered with makeup, or else she'd feel even more pathetic.

She felt stupid already for spending her time crying in the bathroom over the smallest thing. Mikan had initially come with Mahiru, Ibuki, and Hiyoko since they wanted to go as a group. It was fun until she found herself all alone—Mahiru and Hiyoko went off to do their own thing, and Ibuki found herself at the stage with whoever was performing.

She knew that she should've just declined their offer entirely, but she wanted to believe that this time would be different; that maybe she'd be included in their group. But she found herself just hoping for the impossible.

Mikan sniffled and wiped her teary eyes with her forearm. She didn't want to cry again; she didn't know what she would do if someone walked in on her. She turned on the water faucet and splashed her face with water, hoping that it would at least hide the evidence of her crying. After patting her face with the rough brown paper towel, she stole one more look at the mirror.

It was a shame that she was so excited about going to the prom. Mikan had gotten a new dress that Ibuki had convinced her to get while they were all shopping. She ended up getting a dress that had a similar color to her hair. It was a tulle dress with a time that reached the middle of her shins, the front ending just above her slightly bruised knees. The top had an assortment of purple flowers that trailed down around her belly button. There were also a few flowers scattered on her skirt that were about to fall off.

The back of her dress was laced up, the access plum-colored ribbon wrapping around her thin waist, forming a bow just to the side of her hip. Fortunately for her, the dress didn't show much skin, except for her legs. The top of the dress ended around her collarbone and left her shoulders bare.

Mikan was happy that she could feel pretty in it, even if it was just for a short amount of time. She almost felt bad about going home and not letting anyone else see her in it. But it didn't matter, since who would actually want to see her anyways.

She sniffled, wiping away the tears that started to form with the back of her wrist. Mikan looked at herself in the mirror for a few more seconds before turning around. She made her way to the door and tripped on small divots in the tile flooring. She stumbled to the door, putting her hands against the slightly cool wall as she let out a sigh of disappointment.

Her face scrunched up softly when she opened the door, the loud booming music immediately greeting her. A hum of discomfort left her slightly curved lips, a hand clasping over her ear. Mikan half considered going back

inside the bathroom to take refuge, but she needed to get to the front door somehow.

She nervously exited the bathroom, keeping her head low as she walked down the balloon-filled hallways. She hoped that no one would notice her trying to sneak out past the crowd, even though she knew that no one would bother to give her any attention. She almost made it to the door before she bumped into someone.

“S-Sorry...!” She exclaimed, putting her arms up in front of her body and closing her eyes tightly.

“Ah, Mikan...?” A sleepy monotone voice called out from before her, not sounding like they cared about being bumped into.

Mikan opened her eyes cautiously, her hands dropping when she saw Chiaki. She was rubbing her forehead softly, her hair put up in a fancy bun — which is probably the only time she'll put her hair up. She had a decently large choker around her delicate neck, a jewel in its centre, and small beads dangling on the bottom. She had on a pink glittery gown that ended just below her thighs, a sheer fabric that covered her slightly rosy knees.

Mikan looked at the petite girl; she was glad that it was her and not someone else. She let out a nervous hum, lightly rubbing her somewhat throbbing shoulder. “Hey...” Her voice was softly shaking from embarrassment.

Chiaki gave her a small wave before she looked behind her and let out a small gasp. She looked back at Mikan and put her hands together, her lips turning into a small smile. “Oh, right... I was looking for you.”

“Y-You... You were...?”

Chiaki nodded. “Yea, we noticed that you disappeared and wondered where you went. So I went out looking for you.”

Mikan looked at her, surprised that they actually noticed her absence from the group. She figured that they were too preoccupied with other things and forgot that she was there as well. Her clammy and slightly shaky hands grasped onto her skirt, trying to conceal her overwhelming happiness. “R...Really...?”

Chiaki smiled at her and nodded, taking a few steps away from her, and gestured a hand towards their classmates. “Yeah, we wanted to take a picture with everyone together.”

Mikan blinked, getting anxious at the thought of them waiting on her. Her mouth grew dry as guilt settled in, feeling bad that she tried to leave. Her classmates could've gone on without her, but the fact that they waited for her made her feel bad.

She grasped onto her skirt tightly. “I-I... I’m sorry....”

“It’s fine, we were waiting for other people to show up.”

“I... I see...”

Chiaki looked at her before she started to walk off, leaving Mikan to quietly trail after her. When they rejoined the rest of their class, she was met with an array of happy faces to see her. They smiled and waved, telling her they were glad she was there, and made small talk. They made

her feel welcomed into their group before they returned to what they were doing before she made her appearance.

Although Mikan had a feeling that something like that would happen, she couldn't hide the pain that tugged at her chest. She still tried to mingle with her classmates but gave up after she just got talked over and ignored almost every time. Admitting defeat, she stepped away from the group and leaned against a nearby table.

Mikan stared at the finely dressed crowd in front of her, her eyes burning as tears started to form. She had that small glimmer of hope that her short-lived happiness would last longer than it did, or that maybe it would deter her from wanting to leave. But if anything, her joining everyone else just brought up the same thoughts in her mind. The thought that she wasn't really wanted there, nor did she matter to anyone there.

She was brought out of her thoughts when the table behind her shifted and creaked. Mikan looked up and saw Kazuichi standing beside her, a cup of punch in his right hand. He was wearing a neon green suit with a dark grey shirt. He had hot pink suspenders, a tie, and multiple pins on his lapels. He also had hot pink sneakers and didn't seem to care that the black laces were untied.

Kazuichi blankly stared at the group before he sighed, adjusting his slightly wet fingers on the cup in his hand. "So, they kicked you out of the group too?"

Mikan sniffled and looked up at him, her eyebrows furrowing in confusion. "E-Excuse me....?"

He looked down at her, "You got excluded from the group."

“M-Mmm, Yea...”

Kazuichi set his cup on the table and sighed. “Yea, that’s what I figured....”

Mikan looked at him for a bit before she looked down at the ground, shifting in her place a little bit. “I-I...” She trailed off, stopping herself from continuing. She didn’t know if Kazuichi even wanted to listen to her ramble, but it was too late to consider that.

“I... had thought about leaving but... I thought that maybe....” She paused to take in a shaky inhale, “that maybe... I’d be included with everyone else.”

Kazuichi nodded with a small hum, clicking his tongue as he tapped his foot on the ground. “Do you just want to... leave this place?”

“What...?”

Mikan looked up at Kazuichi, her eyes wide in surprise, and stared at him for a couple of seconds. His pink eyes had a sincere look in them, which was something that she wasn’t too used to. He shifted a bit before he looked at her and gave her a warm smile, “Yea, I mean, what’s the point of sticking around if we’re just going to be pushed to the sidelines? We could... We could go do more fun stuff rather than sitting on the sidelines and waiting for them to take a picture that they’re never going to take.”

Kazuichi’s hot pink eyes sparkled with determination and confidence, making his eyes seem more captivating than usual. He held his hand out, the lines along his palm being slightly scrunched up.

Mikan stared into his eyes, a light feeling bubbling up in her chest as her hand started to move on her own. She paused as she thought: What if they needed to be there for that picture? What if they would be an inconvenience to them? She had considered dropping her hand and considering that they waited around, but in the back of her mind, she knew it was okay. She figured that Mahiru had taken all of the pictures she needed, plus not to mention that they would linger around until that moment.

So she took in a slow sigh and grabbed Kazuichi's hand, her slender finger slowly curling around the side of his hand. He gently tightened his grip and rubbed his thumb against the back of her hand.

Kazuichi's smile grew, his eyes starting to shine more once she accepted his offer. He glanced up at the crowd before gently leading her through the maze of tables to the front door. He opened the gymnasium doors with a firm push and walked out into the somewhat chilly night atmosphere.

Mikan squeezed Kazuichi's hand tighter when a strong gust of wind blew past them. Her hair and the back of her dress fluttered behind her, her body tensing up from being cold. Goosebumps quickly filled the surface of her skin; a shiver started to spread across her body.

Kazuichi immediately noticed her actions and stopped in his tracks, pulling his hand out of hers without a word. Mikan tried to quickly close her hand so she could keep a hold on his, but all she was left with was the memory of his warmth. He slid off his neon green jacket and plopped it on her shoulders, adjusting it so it wouldn't fall off. But despite him being taller than her, it slid off regardless.

He patted her shoulder and smiled, “There, is that better?”

Her face quickly turned a shade of red; the words that she wanted to say were stuck in her throat. Her light purple glanced up at his smiling face before they looked at the ground below her. Her slightly shaky hands grasped tight onto the silk lining inside of his jacket, the tips of her fingers poking out.

She swallowed as she nodded. “Y-Yea, but... but won’t... won’t you get cold...?”

Kazuichi’s smile grew as he shook his head, his hot pink hair following his movements. “No, I’ll be fine. I’m more worried about you being cold.”

“M...Mmm....” Mikan hummed as she nodded again, lifting her shoulders a bit to hide the redness on her face.

Kazuichi didn’t say anything about her embarrassment, but instead held his hand back out. She wormed her hand out of his sleeve and grasped it, giving it a small squeeze. He returned the action before he started to walk away from the school campus and into the city.

They were quiet as they walked along the isolated streets with the orange-ish glow from the street lights shining on them. The wind whipped past them and carried the faint scent of rain in the distance.

Mikan wanted to say something to him to break the silence between them, but she couldn’t find the words she wanted to say. Her heart beat faster at the thought of saying something, but she got too anxious and quickly tried forgetting about the idea entirely. The warmth of Kazuichi’s

hand against hers had calmed her down quite a bit, and the anxious thoughts bubbled away.

So instead of saying anything, she squeezed his hand and pressed her fingertips up against his skin; he returned the favour by rubbing the back of her hand with his thumb. Mikan looked up at him and gave him a small smile before she gently bumped into him. He laughed, letting go of her hand to wrap an arm around her and held her tightly.

He kissed her head and pressed her warm body against his. She smiled happily and allowed herself to laugh with him, wrapping her arms around his torso and putting her head in his chest. Her dainty fingers grasped onto the sleeves that hid her fingers, squeezing the fabric as she put her head on his shoulder.

Kazuichi held her close, rubbing her back in a comforting way, and sighed. He rested his head against hers before looking out in the distance, moving a hand to point somewhere. “There’s a park over there, why don’t we head that way?”

Mikan shifted in his arms, following his finger to see what he was pointing at. Across the street sat an almost empty park where street lights illuminated the area, the soft music from an accordion wafting from inside. Some families were walking out of the entrance hand in hand before starting their walk home, steadily disappearing into the darkness.

She stared at it for a bit before she nodded, taking a few steps away from his body, and wriggled her hand out from the oversized sleeve. He reached down and grabbed her hand, rubbing the back of it with a squeeze. She smiled and squeezed it back, lacing her fingers with his as she

walked across the street with him.

As they walked inside, they looked around at the darkened scenery surrounding them. Tall brass streetlights stood along the edges of the brick walkway, a light yellow hue coming from the bright bulbs. Wooden boxes that lined an iron fence that surrounded the premises had different types of flowers planted. In the middle of the park was a white fountain, and an accordion player sat at the edge with a briefcase propped open.

Mikan stood there and was unsure about what they should do now that they were there. She turned to ask Kazuichi but found him standing there with his hand out and his cheeks lightly dusted in pink. "Hey..." His voice cracked as he spoke, "Let's... Let's dance together."

"Wh...What...?"

His face reddened, his fingers curling in self-doubt. "I-I mean... It's... our prom night, right? We should probably dance, o-or if you don't want to, then—"

He cut himself off when Mikan gently placed her hand on top of his, the soft pads of her fingers pressing into the lines along his palm. She looked into his eyes before she embarrassingly looked away, biting her bottom lip as she stared at the ground. They stood there awkwardly for a few seconds before Kazuichi leaned down and grabbed her other hand.

He lifted their hands and took a few steps back, leaving Mikan to follow his actions. The pair awkwardly danced under the streetlight, an accordion acting as their accompaniment. The rain-scented wind blew against their bodies, making everything seem like a scene from a movie.

Some passersby stopped and looked at them, sometimes pointing and making comments about how cute they were. It made her face heat up since she knew that they were being watched, but she didn't want to lose what they had. The warmth of their hands together and how they glided across the ground as they stood close together, doing nothing but hopelessly stare into each other's eyes.

They didn't let anything that happened around them pull them away from each other- Not the laughs and screams of children playing and not the drops of rain that started to fall from the sky. They were in their own world, and nothing was going to pull them out of it.

They continued to dance in the park even after the accordion player left, and they were just the only people left in the world. Kazuichi eventually stopped moving, standing there and holding her hands for a little bit. He let out a slow breath through his mouth and moved his hand to caress her cheek, his wet thumb moving against her skin.

Mikan looked at his bright pink eyes, leaning into his hand and intertwining their fingers, a smile forming on her lips as she ignored the rain that beat down on them. She parted her dripping lips to spark a conversation, but the words became jumbled and sat on the edge of her tongue. “I-I...”

“You... You’re pretty,” Kazuichi choked out, his cheeks warming up as he processed the words that left his mouth.

Mikan’s face heated up as well, “T-Thanks....”

He shook his head with a soft hum, which she barely heard over the static of falling rain. They looked at each

other in awe before they slowly started to inch toward each other, sending glances of approval every few seconds. Kazuichi let in a shaky sigh before using his other hand to cup her cheek and pulling her into a gentle kiss. Mikan's eyes fluttered closed, putting her slightly shaking hands on top of his.

The kiss was gentle, and the sweet taste of the spring rain got into their mouths; their lips connected for a few seconds before they parted. They looked at each other with their eyes wide, static filling the space around them once more.

Kazuichi bit his bottom lip before he averted his gaze, “I... S-Sorry about that, I-”

He cut himself off when he felt a pair of small arms wrap tightly around his torso, the side of Mikan's face pressing into his soaked dress shirt. She squeezed her eyes tightly as her eyes burned, her tears of happiness blending in with the rain rolling down her cheeks.

She sniffled and tightened her grip, “Don't... Don't apologize....”

Kazuichi looked at the top of her head in shock before relaxing his face and wrapping his arms around her. He gave her a reassuring squeeze, resting his head against hers, and smiled softly. “Alright, I won't apologize.”

Mikan hummed in response, not knowing the right words to say other than a small hum; The pair resorted to silence as they held each other closely. They rocked back and forth, going around in a circle as they refused to let go of each other.

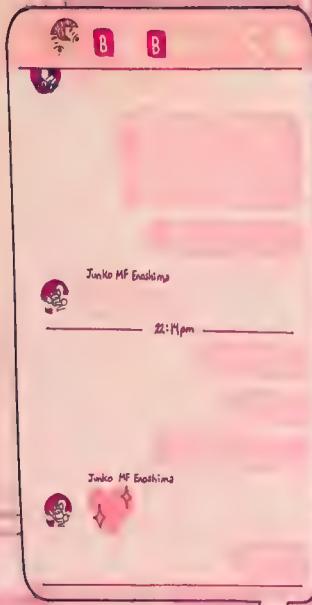
She knew the consequences of their actions — that the both of them were most likely going to wind up sick from lingering in the rain. But she couldn't say that she would be upset if she woke up feeling under the weather, since it was worth every second that they spent together. She would take any sickness if it meant that she got to stay in his warm arms and receive his undivided attention and sweet kisses.

Mikan opened her eyes, looking at the clear drops of water falling in front of her and colliding with the wet ground. A smile grew on her lips as she drew in a deep breath, letting it out through her slightly parted lips. For the first time during that long, tiresome night, she was happy to say that she was glad that she went to prom.











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CREDITS

Writers

"Double (Romantic) Trouble"

Cam

✉️ @Preppycat

@lace_lemon



"Rainy Kisses"

Rin

✉️ @Rin_chan32

🐦 @Rinnnyringring



@Rin-chan32

"One Step at a Time"

Sunny

CRED975

Merchandise



Destringe



@Destringe



@DestringeOfDoom



Maja



@pappilie



@p0mellie

CREDS



Griffin



@crimsonsippet



Oolrie



@oolriel



@oolrie_art

CREDS



Saishii



@saishiichuus

CREDITS

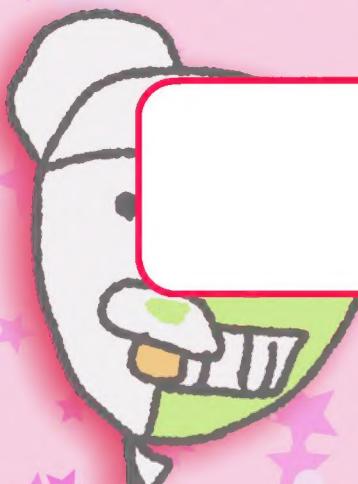
Moderators

Saishii

   @saishiichuuus



Sunny



Hiruwa

 @_hirun.t

CREDITS HOSTS

Moony



@moonyfishhh

Ender



@enderslimee



@ender_slime_



Thank you for supporting

Dance of Despair:

A Danganronpa

Fanzine!



Thank you for
coming!